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Superficial, Shallow Press

Editor: Several New York Times syndicated articles on the Salvadoran rebels appearing in *The Sun* prompt this writer to protest that they represent shallow, superficial reporting. They are probably as misleading as the Times coverage of the Cuban revolution, by their "Man in Havana," Herbert Matthews.

Most Americans, including many news media people, know little about Latin America and care even less. It was partially for that reason and because we usually root for the underdog that so many of us misread Castro's intent. And Cuba is just 90 miles from our shore. El Salvador is much more remote.

We should recall that the Times reports on Castro by Mr. Matthews, who was with him in the Sierra Maestra mountains, led U.S. opinion to favor Fidel. At the time, when U.S. intelligence reports showed otherwise, the Times presented the guerrillas as the good guys fighting for national liberation and democracy. Some liberation! Some democracy! The Times should have known better. Matthews had covered the Spanish Civil War from the leftist Republican side, where he had ample opportunity to observe the machinations of the Communists.

Present coverage of Latin America by U.S. correspondents very often favors leftist causes, while ignoring that Communist

while ignoring that Communist totalitarian governments invariably violate everyone's human rights. While this is not to say that Latin American authoritarian dictatorships are respectful of such rights, they are generally more susceptible to being influenced to govern in a more benign manner by world opinion.

Having spent the better part of a decade in Latin America, working for the U.S. State Department and dealing directly with the public and the news media, this writer feels more secure in accepting U.S. intelligence estimates of the Salvadoran situation than the evaluations of liberal U.S. reporters, who are often naive and lack experience in that part of the world. And I am just as concerned over violations of human rights as is the liberal news media—but better aware of the realities of politics in countries where democracy is poorly understood by the masses.

Hopefully, representative, democratic governments will evolve in all of Latin America, but it will never happen under communism. Cuba is a typical example.

Let's not be snookered into supporting the wrong side in El Salvador, as we were in the cases of Cuba and Nicaragua. We deserve in-depth, balanced reporting from the news media.

Gil Crandall.

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